DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 116 110 CG 010 280

AUTHOR Bartunek, Jean M.; And Others
TITLE Third Party Intervention Style and Intergroup Bargaining.
PUB DATE 1 May 75
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association (46th, Chicago, Illinois, May 2-4, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Accountability; *Conflict Resolution; *Contracts; Group Dynamics; *Intervention; *Negotiation Impasses; Research Projects; *Simulation; Speeches; Teacher Militancy

ABSTRACT

The present study compared the effects of content, process, and passive types of third party intervention on the bargaining behavior of pairs of group representatives. The setting was a simulated school board-teacher's union dispute over a new contract. Each side was represented by one person who was instructed to bargain tenaciously and obtain as much as possible. The job of the representatives was either in jeopardy (High Accountability) or not (Low Accountability). In the content intervention condition, a reasonable settlement was suggested to the representatives by the third party. In the process intervention condition, he taught them how to paraphrase. In the passive condition, he had them take a break from their negotiations. For the high accountable representatives, as predicted, the order of effectiveness of the interventions (number of agreements, average joint profit, and speed of resolution), from most to least, was content, process, and passive. Contrary to expectations, the process intervention did not produce the highest average joint profit for the low accountability representatives. The representatives who did reach agreement in the low accountability-process and content conditions, however, did achieve higher joint profits than the representatives in the passive condition. (Author)

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Third Party Intervention Style and Intergroup Bargaining

Jean M. Bartunek, Alan A. Benton, and Christopher B. Keys

University of Illinois at Chicago Circle

Abstract

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Third Party Intervention Style and Intergroup Bargaining

Jean M. Bartunek, Alan A. Benton, and Christopher B. Keys

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The role of the third party mediator is a traditional one in labor management disputes. In recent years the number and kinds of people and groups who have acted in this role have increased, as have the types of disputes in which some form of third party intervention has been attempted. The various intervention techniques used by those taking this role can be classified in one of two broad categories, content and process. Content interventions emphasize the third party's suggestions to the disputants of specific settlements for their dispute. Process interventions are primarily intended to facilitate the development of a relationship between the disputants in which they are able to work out their own solution. The present study was designed primarily to compare the effects of a content and process type of intervention on the bargaining behavior of pairs of group representatives under high and low negotiator accountability. It was predicted that when the pairs of representatives were highly accountable to their constituents the content intervention would lead to more, faster, and higher average agreements than the process intervention. On the other hand, under low negotiator accountability, the process intervention was expected to be more effective in helping the representatives reach good outcomes than the content intervention. A passive intervention, which consisted primarily of a short "break" from the negotiations, was expected to be less effective than the content and process interventions under both accountability levels.

The findings obtained in a number of studies concerning the effects of accountability on the behavior of group representatives (e.g. Benton, 1972, Klimoski, 1972) indicate that the relationship between the representatives

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Paper presented at the meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association, Chicago, May 1, 1975.

and their constituents is likely to be the primary concern of the high accountable representatives in the present study. They can not afford to be weak, but must appear to obtain as much as possible for their groups. Their problem is how to safely reduce their negotiation demands and also reach an agreement acceptable to their respective constituencies. A third party's proposed resolution of the conflict, i.e. a content intervention, provides these negotiators with a good potential solution to this bargaining problem. It can help the representatives save face with their constituencies by enabling them to shift responsibility for their concessions to the mediator. In addition, when the substantive recommendation is a good profitable settlement for both sides, as it was in this study, it enables the negotiators to satisfy their constituents' goals.

Although the representative - constituent relationship is likely to be of primary concern to the high accountable negotiators, the representative - representative relationship is also important to them. Inaccurate or incorrectly received communication between the representatives can lead to misperception and inappropriate responses and thus reduce the probability of successful negotiation outcomes. Several authors have proposed that paraphrasing by negotiators, that is, their repeating the other's message in their own words, can assist them in maintaining accurate communication. It reduces the probability of misunderstandings and consequent inappropriate responses. It may also help to create a more positive and cooperative relationship between the parties. Paraphrasing was used as the process intervention in the present study.

There are constraints which should limit the high accountable negotiators' use of paraphrasing. Competitive bargaining is expected of them by their constituencies. This expectation, and their constituents' power over them, should limit their freedom to communicate completely. Thus, paraphrasing should not always be used in this situation, and, consequently, the process intervention should not be as beneficial here as the content intervention.

The low accountable representatives are not under the same constituent pressure as the high accountable representatives. They are freer to act as they choose during the negotiations. Walton (1969) and Fisher (1972) have suggested that it is under this greater freedom that a process form of intervention is most likely to be effective. Thus, it was anticipated that in the low accountability condition the process intervention would be the most effective intervention style.

Method

Subjects and Design

144 male introductory psychology students at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle served as negotiators.

The experimental design was a 3 x 2 factorial. The first factor was intervention style: process, content, and passive interventions. The second factor was degree of accountability, high or low. The unit of analysis was the bargaining dyad.

Task

The multi-issue bargaining task, which was adapted from Kelley (1966) and from Lewis and Pruit (1971) was a simulated school board - teachers' union contract dispute. Each bargaining representative was given a profit - loss sheet and a position paper relevant to his role. The profit - loss sheet, which is shown in Figure 1, lists the average amounts of money per

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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teacher that would be gained or lost at 9 potential levels on each of 3 issues: number of students per class, amount of clerical work done by teachers, and extra duties by teachers. As can be seen in Figure 1, the issue providing the highest potential gain for the school board was extra duties. For the teachers' union the issue providing the highest potential gain was number of students per class. Class size was least important for the school board,

while extra duties was least important for the teachers' union.

In addition to a role description, the position papers contained information defining the low and high accountability condition. In the low accountability condition the subjects were told that their contract recently had been renewed for three years and that the result of the negotiations would not affect job tenure. In the high accountability condition subjects were told that their contracts as representatives would be considered for renewal the following month. In deciding whether to select them again, their constituency would carefully examine the results of the present negotiations. (It should be noted that in this condition additional subjects acted as "constituents.: The representatives expected to be evaluated by these constituents at the end of the negotiation session.)

The position papers informed the representatives that because of previous unproductive sessions and the need to reach agreement they had both agreed to engage a third party. This person would intervene for about 5 minutes out of their 25 minute session. The representatives were also told that in order to sign a contract agreement was required on all 3 issues. They could, however, choose a different level on each issue.

Procedures

As the beginning of the experimental session the roles were briefly explained. The roles of negotiator and, when necessary, constituent, were randomly assigned using a card selection procedure. Although there was no mediator card, the confederate always reported that he had selected the mediator role.

The experimenter then gave the two representatives the appropriate profit - loss sheets and position papers and sent them to separate rooms to study their situation and plan future actions.

After 10 minutes to learn their roles, the two representatives were brought to the negotiation room, and the experimenter officially endorsed and introduced the third party and reviewed the bargaining procedure. The third party

briefly indicated the way he would intervene, and the two representatives then negotiated for five minutes. At this point the third party stopped them. He asked for their profit - loss sheets and studied them briefly. In the passive condition he had the representatives return to their room for a five minute break. In the content condition he also asked the negotiators to return to their room while he studied their profit - loss sheets. After about 4 minutes he recalled them and suggested a solution. He told the representatives each other's order of priorities, and suggested that each one give the other his highest priority and split the difference on clerical work. In the process condition he taught them how to paraphrase, and gave them a brief practice period using this technique. The bargainers then continued their negotiations until they reached an agreement on all three issues or time ran out.

Results

Measures of paraphrasing were obtained through content analysis of the bargaining tapes by two raters. As expected, prior to the intervention, there were almost no instances of paraphrasing. After the intervention, analysis indicated that subjects in the high accountability process intervention cell paraphrased significantly more than subjects in any of the other cells. There were no significant differences between intervention conditions in the low accountability condition.

Bargaining outcome measures Three measures were used to examine the outcomes of the bargaining for the various dyads: agreement, the proportion of dyads in each cell which reached an agreement, amount, the total amount of money gained by each dyad, and speed, the speed with which the agreement was reached. The mean values of the three dependent variables for the different conditions are presented in Table 1. Also included in the table are

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Insert Table 1 about here

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the mean amount values for just those dyads which reached agreements.

The experimental predictions were tested by means of several planned comparisons which, along with their results, are presented in Table 2. The

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Insert Table 2 about here

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predictions which are presented in that table represent the specific contrasts implied for the experimental hypotheses described earlier. In addition, a main effect for accountability and a deviation contrast, described in Table 2, were also tested.

the results indicated that contrast 1 approached statistical significance. The effect was contributed to by the amount and speed measures. The dyads in the high accountability condition reached higher agreements and bargained for shorter periods of time than did the dyads in the high accountability process condition.

There were no significant effects for contrasts 2 or 3 or for that testing an accountability effect. A significant effect, however, was obtained for the deviation contrast which was due to all 3 dependent variables. Analysis by means of Scheffe tests indicated that the significant effects for this contrast occurred for the agreement, speed, and amount variables in the high accountability condition and for the speed variable in the low accountability condition. In the high accountability condition the process and content interventions led to more agreements, higher amounts, and briefer negotiations than the passive intervention. There were no significant differences in agreements or amounts between the various intervention styles in the low accountability condition. In this condition, however, the passive condition dyads bargained for a shorter period of time than did those in the process and content intervention conditions.

The mean amounts for those dyads which reached agreement are presented in Table 1. As can be seen, the dyads in the low accountability - passive intervention condition made a larger number of rapid agreements than the dyads

in the other two low accountability conditions, but these agreements were of relatively poor quality. The dyads in the low accountability process condition, on the other hand, did not reach a large number of agreements, but tended to achieve high amounts when they did agree. In the high accountability condition the dyads in the passive intervention condition reached agreements significantly less often than did those in the other two intervention conditions and when they did agree, tha amounts were comparatively low.

Discussion

As noted earlier, one of the third party's functions is to suggest concessions neither of the disputants is free to make. Acceeding to the third party's suggestions permits the representatives to save face with their constituents, since the third party is considered a respectable and impartial source of proposals. Such a mechanism was apparently operating in the high accountability condition here. Subjects in the process intervention - high accountability condition paraphrased significantly more than any of the other subjects. Subjects in the high accountability content condition accepted the third party's suggestion of a proposed solution more often than did the low accountability content intervention subjects. And four of the dyads in the high accountability passive intervention condition arguedwith the third party during their break time; they wanted him to be more helpful.
It is a plausible interpretation of these findings that the high accountability condition increased the face saving problem for the representatives. They were happy when the third party made a reasonable suggestion and were quick to accept it.

One reason the content intervention led to higher amounts and faster settlements than the process intervention in the high accountability condition may have been that during the relatively brief experimental bargaining session task relevant information was more helpful than the use of process skills. Recent studies in both the bargaining and counseling literature (e.g. those of Kahn and Kohls, 1972, and Payne and Gralinski, 1968) have demonstrated

that in similar short term sessions in which subjects lack complete information about their task, task relevant information tends to be more helpful.

Although use of the "cooling - off" period is a time honored tactic of third parties in labor - management disputes, the high accountability - passive intervention condition in the present study produced relatively poor outcomes. The results suggest that use of a cooling - off period, to be successful, should, at least sometimes, be accompanied by some substantive third party recommendation.

The low accountability findings differed somewhat from those predicted. It appears that the representatives in the passive condition were more concerned with terminating their negotiations than obtaining high amounts. More central to the present investigation, however, was the fact that the low accountability process intervention was not more effective than the low accountability content intervention. It is certainly the case that for paraphrasing to be helpful it must be used well and at appropriate times. In this study the third party did not give instructions regarding when those times might be. It may be that the high accountable representatives, who were experiencing greater constituent pressure, made more attempts than the low accountable process representatives to use appropriately the third party's suggestion that they paraphrase.

Under what conditions are particular types of intervention effective? The results here suggest that for an intervention to be effective the negotiators must be motivated to reach agreement. In addition, a content intervention seems to be most beneficial when the negotiators are under pressure to reach agreement quickly and the third party introduces useful task - relevant information and proposes a reasonable settlement based on that information. It may be hypothesized that for process interventions to be effective the process skills suggested by the intermediary must be adequately learned, used, and given time to have an impact.

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Table 1

Values of the Outcome Measures for the Experimental Conditions

Variable	High Accountability			Low Accountability		
	Process	Content	Passive	Process	Content	Passive
Agreement[a]	.67	.92	.25	.42	.67	.83
Speed[b]	28.82	17.79	65.36	38.31	28.41	20.20
Amount[c]	68.33	118.33	23.33	53.33	86.67	76.67
Amount for dyads[d] reaching agreements	102.50	129.09	93.32	127.99	130.01	92.00

[a]Proportion of agreements in each cell. n/cell = 12

[b]Harmonic mean times (low values indicate comparatively fast agreements).

[c]Mean amount of money gained by each dyad (if no agreement was reached the amount was zero).

[d]For all measures the unit of analysis was the bargaining dyad.

Table 2

Comparisons and Results for the Outcome Variables

Planned Comparisons	Results of Analysis	
	Multivariate Analysis	Dependent Variable / Univariate Analysis
1. In the high accountability condition the content form of intervention should lead to more agreements, higher amounts, and briefer negotiations than the process intervention.	F (3,64) = 2.38, $p<.08$	Amount F (1,66) = 3.96, $p<.05$ Agreement n.s. Speed F (1,66) = 3.72, $p<.06$
2. In the low accountability condition, the process form of intervention should lead to higher amounts than the content form of intervention	n.s.	
3. There should be a main effect for intervention style. The process and content interventions should lead to more agreements and higher amounts than the passive intervention	n.s.	
Other Comparisons tested		
Main Effect for accountability	n.s.	
Deviation contrast testing the hypothesis that in the high accountability condition the content and process interventions lead to better outcomes than the passive intervention, while in the low accountability condition the passive intervention leads to better outcomes than the process and content interventions.	F (2,64) = 4.85, $p<.004$	[a]Agreement F (1,66) = 14.01, $p<.001$ [a]Amount F (1,66) = 6.21, $p<.02$ [b]Speed F (1,66) = 12.70, $p<.001$

[a]Results of Scheffe tests indicated that effects for these variables occurred only in the high accountability condition.

[b]Results of Scheffe tests indicated that the effect for this variable occurred in both accountability conditions.

Teachers Union				School Board			
Level	Number students per class	Amount Clerical Work	Extra Duties	Level	Number students per class	Amount Clerical Work	Extra Duties
A	+$160	+$80	$00	A	-$80	-$80	-$80
B	+ 130	+ 60	- 10	B	- 70	- 60	- 50
C	+ 100	+ 40	- 20	C	- 60	- 40	- 20
D	+ 70	+ 20	- 30	D	- 50	- 20	+ 10
E	+ 40	00	- 40	E	- 40	00	+ 40
F	= 10	- 20	- 50	F	- 30	+ 20	+ 70
G	- 20	- 40	- 60	G	- 20	+ 40	+100
H	- 50	- 60	- 70	H	- 10	+ 60	+130
I	- 80	- 80	- 80	I	00	+ 80	+160

Figure 1. Teachers Union and School Board Profit and Loss Tables